



## **MEETING SUMMARY**

### **TRANS-LAKE WASHINGTON PROJECT TECHNICAL COMMITTEE BELLEVUE PUBLIC SAFETY TRAINING CENTER, BELLEVUE, WA JUNE 19, 2001 — 9:30 A.M. – 4:00 P.M.**

#### **INTRODUCTION, WELCOME, AND AGENDA REVIEW**

Pat Serie, EnviroIssues, opened the meeting and reviewed the agenda. The purpose of the meeting was to continue reviewing and discussing the multi-modal alternatives evaluation findings, and raise questions that still need to be answered. The committee was not asked to recommend to the Executive Committee the list of alternatives that should be evaluated in the EIS. There were no changes made to the agenda.

#### **ADVISORY COMMITTEE DISCUSSION SUMMARY**

Amy Grotefendt, EnviroIssues, summarized some of the points made in the advisory committee discussion the day before. The points summarized are:

- Support for some of the alternatives, especially 4 and 6 lanes;
- Interest in smallest footprint;
- Support for HOV and strong support for HCT in SR 520 and preserving that option;
- Concern with unknowns and how this fits into regional picture;
- Representative from Eastlake was concerned with noise through tunnel into I-5;
- Interest in pursuing TDM package work;
- Interest in pricing, trip reduction strategies;
- One person was interested in preserving choices for all modes including GP.

The Seattle neighborhoods and interest groups, and two east side representatives, were present at the Advisory Committee meeting. There was strong support vocalized for preserved the HCT option for SR 520, and a corollary to that was that there was a disinterest in pursuing the wider alternatives.

A preferred alternative is not a requisite for carrying out the EIS process. Les Rubstello, WSDOT, stated that a preferred alternative would be needed by Spring 2002 to bring project funding to a vote by fall 2002.

Jeff Peacock, Parametrix, stated that one of the more difficult decisions is how to deal with HCT, and what information is needed for Sound Transit to make that determination. Sound Transit

will then need to decide whether to do a programmatic EIS to document the decision and preserve ROW in the SR 520 corridor, or if Sound Transit can include the Trans-Lake EIS as a part of its project.

## **REVIEW OF EVALUATION CONCLUSIONS**

Jeff Peacock, Parametrix, reviewed the conclusions presented at the June 13, 2001, committee workshop, noting the key points from each of the 4-, 6-, and 8-lane alternatives. He reiterated that the team felt the 4- and 6-lane alternatives should be evaluated in the EIS. He also reviewed the 8-lane alternative conclusions, and restated the resulting questions regarding those alternatives.

Discussion and questions are summarized below.

- HOV lanes should be fairly free flowing during the peak period. No action was assumed at I-405, and direct HOV access was assumed wherever the team thought it could fit. Some connections, such as to the South Kirkland Park and Ride, are physically very difficult. Some local access will require modification.
- The 6-lane alternatives did not show a significant increase in the vehicle throughput. A 25-30% increase in vehicle throughput would be considered significant.
- Some ramps such as at NE 124<sup>th</sup> Ave would need to be closed, since the proximity to the I-405 interchange would cause rippling effects onto both I-405 and SR 520. The movements would need to be separated, or access eliminated for some.
- One committee member emphasized that the person throughput will be extremely important throughout the discussion.
- Jeff Peacock stated that the Advisory Committee wondered why there was only a 3% increase in vehicle throughput in the 6-lane options as compared to the no action. He stated that the no action is pushing people into ridesharing, even though there are not a lot of incentives to do that. He also stated that the 3% increase is for both I-90 and SR 520. HOV 3+ is increasing by sevenfold on the corridor, and transit use is doubling. The travel demand model views the HOV lane on the east side as a currently functioning lane.
- The percent increases show an 8% increase for 6-lane alternatives in vehicle throughput in the SR 520 corridor, and a 16% increase in person throughput over alternative 2. It was suggested that a qualitative choice must be made about what is significant. Jeff Peacock stated that the 6-lane alternatives give a 3-7% increase in vehicle throughput on both corridors, and that it might be helpful to look at raw numbers as well. The numbers should be taken in context.
- The 8-lane alternatives will show huge problems at 108<sup>th</sup> Ave NE and 124<sup>th</sup> Ave NE, especially after integrating the I-405 preferred preliminary alternative (PPA). The PPA will be modeled for both the 6-, and 8-lane alternatives as part of the next steps.

- Bernard van de Kamp, Bellevue, stated that the 124<sup>th</sup> Ave NE interchange may be moved further east after discussions with the neighborhoods. He also encouraged a way to keep the 108<sup>th</sup> Ave NE interchange open, as its closure would have a detrimental effect on Bellevue Way. Jim Arndt, Kirkland, also stated that the 108<sup>th</sup> Ave NE closure would be difficult for Kirkland because of the impacts to Lake Washington Blvd.
- The question was raised about what happens in the cumulative impact analysis when capacity is reached again.
- Jeff Peacock, in responding to a suggestion to evaluate the no action, 4-, 6-, and 8-lane alternatives in the EIS, stated that the team questions analyzing that many alternatives in the EIS. It may be more possible to focus more energy on the interchange options that go into the EIS. He also stated that the committees should feel comfortable with the alternatives that will be analyzed.
- HCT assumptions included a LINK line from Northgate to Sea-Tac. This has implications for the way a BRT system could be run. The demand for a BRT system would not be a problem in the near term, but after 2020, the constraints of such a system, both in terms of sharing capacity on roadways, as well as congestion in center areas, starts to show. Modeling does not assume the phase 2 expansion of LINK light rail.
- It was suggested that HOT lanes or other managed lanes be considered for all alternatives. This may allow preservation of capacity for BRT, limit the impact from an 8-lane facility, and keep lanes operating indefinitely over congestion.
- It was suggested that managed lanes address traffic management and financing, but do not address capacity issues at transit centers and raises questions about assumptions for HOV 2+/3+.
- Roger Horton, WSDOT, suggested the use of the term “managed lanes” instead of HOT lanes. Managed lanes may or may not use tolls, and may use different techniques such as credits. The I-405 discussion also uses the term “managed lanes.”
- Managed lanes are optimized to maximize throughput. If an 8-lane option doesn’t perform well as regular lanes, then it won’t usually work as a managed set of lanes. Managed lanes are generally created in pairs.
- It was suggested that an inability to accommodate the 8-lane alternative with I-5 might represent one of the starting constraints. There would be little likelihood of expanding I-5 given the width and constraints of neighborhoods. The 8-lane alternatives have no redeeming value in cost, represent the worst impacts, and have difficult intersections with I-405 and I-5.
- It was also suggested that the 8-lane alternative might not have exhausted all the possibilities for making it work within the constraints.

- What other information is needed to address some of the alternatives, what is needed to make a recommendation on these? Jeff Peacock stated the question is ultimately one of whether to continue to do some analysis now to narrow the alternatives, or to do that analysis in the EIS. There is a significant amount of work that can be done before the EIS. With HCT, the assumption was that I-90 would have HOV lanes in the outer roadways. Now that option needs to be looked at without the HOV lanes in the outer roadway.
- Additional HCT access to downtown Seattle via the University District could be a longer-term question that makes use of the LINK capacity until that is filled.
- Jeff Peacock stated that the question of I-90 light rail and geometry needs to be investigated to see if the center lanes could accommodate light rail and leave enough room on the outer roadways to add an HOV lane. He also suggested that a parallel HCT crossing at I-90 should still be looked at. Roger Horton stated that if light rail were put on I-90, then the same questions about geometry and safety would be raised by FHWA. There would be enough room to accommodate the light rail and an HOV lane on the outer roadway of the Homer Hadley bridge, but the rest of the corridor would remain the same.
- The question of HCT on SR 520 remains a question of whether the ROW should be preserved in that corridor. NEPA issues push that further to ask if the proper analysis can be carried out with the expenditures to analyze and preserve ROW without alignment specific detail in a project level EIS.
- Don Billen, Sound Transit, suggested that an interim use for the SR 520 HCT corridor not be assigned if the ROW is preserved, lest the corridor find itself in a situation such as I-90 where there is resistance to changing the use and operation.
- It was suggested that design should incorporate ways to accommodate other features such as light rail, especially if lidding is proposed on the facility. It was noted that expansion of I-5 from Seattle to Tacoma is hindered by the presence of narrow overpasses.
- There was a suggestion that it is difficult to swallow the constraints on I-5 on this project, when it is unknown who is generating the demand, who is responsible for the capacity, and who is forced to accept the burden of the capacity. The regional part of the discussion seems to be at cross-purposes with the local needs. It will take some tough, honest, and frank discussion to get to the heart of the neighborhood/regional questions.
- The Points communities need to have the mitigation and enhancement opportunities outlined at the forefront of the project, and not continually pushed to the end.
- There has been a lot of work done to find ways to avoid impacts already, and there is still more that can and will be done.

- The team would like to meet with the Executive Committee on June 27, 2001, with a solid understanding of the work needed to narrow the EIS alternatives, or decide that all need to be evaluated.
- A menu of mitigation/enhancement options should be identified going into the EIS, and all identified avoidances thus far should be left untouched.
- It was suggested that enhancements should be linked to particular alternatives. Jeff Peacock stated that the enhancements could be identified, but that the process of the EIS discloses the impacts to enable the targeting of the mitigation. It is likely that lidding, for example, will be suggested, or needed, or will come out of the EIS process.
- Lorie Parker, CH2M Hill, reviewed briefly the definition of mitigation and enhancements, and the types that will likely be done in the corridor.
- It was suggested that there is enough information already to make a decision about the alternatives to analyze in the EIS. There will be many opportunities to influence the final design through the process of the EIS.
- Jonathan Freedman, EPA, stated that the EIS should examine a reasonable range of alternatives and sharply contrast them, so that reviewers understand clearly what the differences are. Mitigation decisions will be made later, though they will be part of the discussion. The details of some of the mitigation should not preclude the selection of alternatives for analysis.
- It was suggested that the urban growth boundary be shown on maps.

## **REMAINING QUESTIONS ON TRANSPORTATION EFFECTIVENESS**

The following questions and points were identified as some of the remaining questions on transportation effectiveness.

- A suggestion was made that the modeling team meet with PSRC to discuss the lessons learned in the last few months, idiosyncrasies, underestimates, and to discuss the upgrades and improvements that can be made for the model. The model runs for the next phase will be important as the next stage is examined, especially regarding transit ridership and HOV performance and speeds.
- The model runs including the I-405 PPA will be done, and then an operational analysis will be completed. A short findings summary of the modeling will be completed in the next few weeks, followed by an operational analysis several weeks after that.
- It was suggested that operations in 2020 are expected to perform well, and person throughput will discourage non-roadway efforts. How will it be possible to capture a better long-range person throughput on HCT? Decisions should be made on accurate sustainability projections, while looking at the long-term performance. Jeff Peacock stated that although the congestion information shows the 6-lane alternatives performing

well, the operational model would show deficiencies. He also stated that the team has tried to share information about sustainability/extra capacity into the future.

- It was suggested that the EIS look at both 2020 as well as 2030 for planning purposes.
- The team is fairly confident that in 2020/2030, the facility will be at its vehicle carrying capacity. The question was raised about what happens environmentally when that situation is reached.
- A question was raised about what constitutes the best results – throughput, mode split, traffic volumes, throughput during peak hours, person trips per day. Is there something in the purpose and need statement that the results can be brought back to, to help differentiate between what is good and bad? Jeff Peacock stated that it is difficult to make judgments on the data while remaining objective. Vehicle throughput, for example, could be argued to be either good or bad. Pat Serie stated that there was no explicit weighting scheme defined for the criteria. The team can draw more specific links from the criteria to the purpose and need, but the decision of how well the purpose and need is satisfied is up to committee members.
- Interchange alternatives and an evaluation process with the local jurisdictions are some of the more immediate pieces of work that need to be performed. The team has been working with local community groups and jurisdictions on ideas and options, and the bulk of the work will continue with the local jurisdictions individually.
- Sound Transit expects the Alternative Transit Technology Assessment report in draft form by the end of June 2001. Of the Sound Transit research and development budget, 80% is dedicated to bus, commuter rail, and light rail technologies. The remaining is committed to developing emerging technologies.
- The HCT options for SR 520 are being defined with the characteristics of light rail without making the technology choice decision. Recommendations from the Trans-Lake Project will go to the Sound Transit board, and the board should be able to make a decision this summer about whether it has enough information to make a corridor decision. It will be difficult to know what the decision will be until more information is available about the possibilities on I-90.
- It was suggested that the I-90 decision is not likely to be made by the time the alternatives for the Trans-Lake EIS are selected, and therefore it would be wise to put HCT in the SR 520 corridor. It was also suggested that the uncertainty of the LINK light rail makes the Trans-Lake EIS process more complicated.
- East-west bus volumes into Seattle will be affected by the presence of LINK light rail at Northgate. The project should know whether Sound Transit will look at a programmatic or project level EIS, and explain to the Executive Committee the implications of each. A potential project improvement would be for LINK to help reduce downtown Seattle bus volumes and maintain capacity for east-west service on the Trans-Lake corridor.

- It was suggested that the completion of LINK may be a part of a regional funding package, and is not affected as much as by environmental issues as an outside indication of 'the success of the corridor being dependent on the success of other parts of the system.'
- Since I-5 already carries a huge volume of traffic, the lack of additional capacity is an impediment to the other alternatives; if capacity constraints on I-5 were less burdensome, could the alternatives be considered?
- On SR 520, different highway alternative haven't affected traffic volumes on I-5 at all. The traffic operations analysis will reveal some of the limitations of I-5.
- It was suggested that the HOV lane contribution to mobility would allow BRT to operate concurrently for a period of time. The performance of the bus-only lanes is not impressive until it is coupled with the HOV lanes.
- Demand management and pricing strategies will be investigated on a regional and corridor basis, with sensitivity testing for pricing levels and the effect on demand. A discussion will be needed to determine whether pricing would be a part of the EIS.
- It was suggested that implementation of pricing strategies may affect the design. It was also suggested that pricing strategies not be targeted solely on the SR 520 corridor, but that a more regional strategy be adopted.
- It was suggested that BRT conclusions, characterized as 'highly effective,' should be tied to a timeframe to reflect degraded performance as 2020 is approached.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**

Lorie Parker, CH2M Hill, fielded questions on the environmental impacts evaluation. She stated that the EPA evaluation of wetlands focuses on functions and values, as opposed to the state categorization of wetlands. She did note that there was some correlation between highly functioning wetlands, and the higher-level categories. She also noted that in some cases the alignments are not yet well defined, as in the case of HCT through Redmond, and therefore the impacts are not very intuitive. Alignments and impacts will change as avoidance is done in the design. Lorie stated that the GIS information would be checked in meetings with each jurisdiction, including a meeting with King County.

Discussion and questions are summarized below.

- Open spaces, such as at UW or Redmond, can be mapped for the planners, but will not be considered under 4(f) rules. Redmond officials are very concerned about preserving previously negotiated open spaces in Redmond.
- It was suggested that sub-use issues be well communicated with the public, on issues such as relocating paths versus impacts to parks.

- 4(f) rules make use of designations outlined in local comprehensive plans, even if the original intent was not to have a permanent facility, as in the case of WSDOT right-of-ways. It was suggested that a legal discussion with WSDOT occur regarding designations of ROWs, to guide the agency in giving easements in the future. It was suggested that elected officials might designate trails and other parks differently from traditional parks to help facilitate the process of working within them.

## **COSTS**

Jeff Peacock fielded questions on costs. Discussion and questions are summarized below. In response to the comment at one of the workshops, where it was stated that the UW spends \$9 million per year on TDM for that facility alone, it was noted that 8/9s of those expenditures go toward transit service. Transit service costs are external to the TDM costs in the Trans-Lake project.

It was suggested that a summary of HCT costs be prepared, being clear of what is included and not included. It was also suggested that the modal costs not be isolated, but that the total corridor investment be looked at.

## **GENERAL DISCUSSION**

General discussion points at the end of the meeting are summarized below.

- Since more information is needed concerning the I-405 PPA implications; clarification on the I-90 versus SR 520 HCT route and further Sound Transit information, more information about 108<sup>th</sup> Ave NE and 124<sup>th</sup> Ave NE impacts, and more enhancement and mitigation information is needed, it was suggested that the process is not yet ready for a decision.
- It was suggested that the information to be gathered in the next few months be presented in a meaningful way, in advance of making the decision.
- A systems integration analysis needs to be done to look at the implications of the 6-, and 8- lane facilities, with and without the LINK extension to Northgate.
- It will be critical to set the timeframe for making the decision, and have contingencies in place in case decisions on other projects are not made in the meantime.
- The I-5 constraints especially need to be investigated. The I-405 PPA will affect the traffic volumes into I-5, though it is not sure how. FHWA also has stringent access evaluation reports for any interchange changes or changes in volume into a facility. It was suggested that no constituency in Seattle supports I-5 expansion, and that major progress has been made in having the Montlake community support six lanes through Montlake. There is not much community/elected support beyond that already given.
- It was also suggested that there is enough information available to make a decision on the EIS alternatives. There is enough information on the political level to know how the



alternatives follow area interests; and on a general level, to understand the general comparisons between the alternatives. On the technical side, the dilemma is understood to be how to have appropriate protections built-in for communities, while at the same time meeting regional needs; some of this can be sorted out through the EIS process. Support for alternatives 1, 2, 5, and 6 was voiced.

- It was later suggested that alternatives 3 and 7 be added to the list above for their contribution of BRT possibilities.
- In the extended time, it was suggested that the refinement of the alternatives in the next few months include:
  - Feasibility of the interchanges;
  - Specifying avoidances;
  - Addressing regional issues;
  - Systems integration with other facilities;
  - I-5 terminus.
- It was suggested that it would be premature to drop the 8-lane alternatives without understanding the I-405 PPA implications.
- The timeline for completing the project may waylay some of the community negatives if the whole process is looked at. Mitigation and enhancements locations should be shown. There was some cynicism expressed about the realistic possibility of lids being included in the project.
- Elected officials in the Points communities feel that the uncertainty about mitigation options is a critical issue, and need definite assurance that the mitigation and enhancement options won't be dropped.
- A timeline of what need is needed should be put out for the Executive Committee. Based on information heard during the meeting, there is no reason that the decision cannot be held off until September 2001, and that a decision made at that time would have more ownership among the decision-makers. Making the decision at this time would be difficult because the volume of information has not been fully understood and synthesized.

The project team will address the Executive Committee on June 27, 2001, with an outline of basic information that needs to be worked on, and a timeline and workplan for having that information by the fall. Pat Serie stated there would be one or two Technical Committee meetings in September 2001, to present findings through that time.

## **MEETING HANDOUTS**

- Agenda

## **MEETING ATTENDEES**

### *Technical Committee Members*

<b>Present</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
X	Arndt Jim	City of Kirkland
X	Billen Don	Sound Transit
	Bowman Jennifer	Federal Transit Administration
	Brooks Allyson	Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
	Conrad Richard	City of Mercer Island
X	Cushman King	Puget Sound Regional Council
X	Dewey Peter	University of Washington
	Fisher Larry	Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife
	Gibbons Tom	National Marine Fisheries Service
	Kennedy Jack	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
	Kenny Ann	Washington Department of Ecology
	Kircher Dave	Puget Sound Clean Air Agency
	Leonard Jim	Federal Highway Administration
X	Marpert Terry	City of Redmond
X	Martin Ann	King County Department of Transportation
X	Newstrum Len	Town of Yarrow Point
X	Rave Krista	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
	Pratt Austin	U.S. Coast Guard, 13 <sup>th</sup> District
X	Sanchez Susan	City of Seattle
X	Schulze Doug	City of Medina
	Sparrman Goran	City of Bellevue
X		(Bernard van de Kamp)
	Sullivan Maureen	WSDOT – NW Region
	Teachout Emily	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
X	Wasserman Mitch	City of Clyde Hill
X	Willis Joe	Town of Hunts Point

### *Other attendees*

Johnathan Freedman, U.S. EPA

Kim Becklund, City of Bellevue

Aubrey Davis, Washington Transportation Commission

### *Project Team*

Les Rubstello, WSDOT

Jeff Peacock, Parametrix

Lorie Parker, CH2M Hill

Anne Sienko, CH2M Hill

Alene Wilson, CH2M Hill

Don Billen, Sound Transit

John Perlic, Parametrix

Jane Farquharson, PSTC

Cathy Strombom, Parsons Brinckerhoff

Kim Farley, WSDOT

Roger Horton, WSDOT

Pat Serie, EnviroIssues

Amy Grotefendt, EnviroIssues  
Paul Hezel, EnviroIssues

PJH